

A Manner of

Speaking

by Bonnie Neugebauer



Everyone says that opportunity knocks. It doesn't. Opportunity is just there, to see or not — to use or pass by.

Wouldn't it be great if opportunity really did knock. It would be so much easier to hear that loud tap and know to pay attention. But really, we have to do all the work. Every day we decide over and over again whether to seek out opportunity or to hold steady right where we are. Whether we think there's an opportunity around every corner or that we never get a break is largely up to the way we choose to look at things.

Of course, paying attention to opportunity requires work and sometimes we are too busy, preoccupied, overwhelmed to give life that scrutiny. To recognize an opportunity for what it is, to work with it, takes energy. Sometimes we have it and sometimes we don't.

New situations make us more aware of opportunities lying in wait. As we work to make sense of new surroundings, new people, new situations and experiences, we have a greater need to gather information — and some of that information, quite a lot of it as a matter of fact, is about opportunity.

Will I engage or hold back?
Will I lead or follow?
Will I use the information or forget about it?
Will I consider that idea?
Will I return to this context?

People and relationships await our choices. Personal growth, contexts for self study are all there. But they aren't knocking.

I recently found myself riding the bus into Seattle day after day. I was involved with a diverse group of people, all living their lives in very different ways. I performed different tasks — trying to make sense of it all, the bus routes, the people, the context. Yes, I was on jury duty. It was a great opportunity to try out different ways of being me — and to take greater risks in engagement. And it struck me all the many times during the days that I made choices about whether to engage or to stand by the sidelines. Sometimes I knocked. Sometimes I didn't.

It's important to recognize that the burden is on us, the work our own. We can seek out opportunities, recognize them, pursue them, even create them. But if we want our lives to be challenging, dynamic, energetic, if we want to meet people and encounter ideas, we cannot wait for opportunity to knock.